Handel & Haydn

161st
1975-76

3/26/76

Notes by Conrad Susa

Transformations is an entertainment in two parts of five scenes each. The text, from the late Anne Sexton's book of the same name, is a highly personal telling of some of Grimm's fairy tales.

Transformations is an entertainment in the manner of story theater through music. This means that it is largely an ensemble piece especially suited for singers who can command popular as well as classical singing styles and who relish chances to play witches, towers, mirrors, greedy fathers, or evil queens. The work is designed for eight singers and eight instrumentalists. Just as Anne Sexton transforms the Brothers Grimm so is the piece designed to provide many transformations of roles.

The word *transformation* is also used in the sense that it applies to the style of the metamorphoses. For example, I ask that the part of the Wonderful Musician be sung in a Bing Crosby style so that the particular feeling of Anne Sexton's world is strengthened. Such a role, and there are many like it, is not to be taken at mere face value. It requires an additional layer of style, an additional transformation, to bring it into the main action of the work. Nor are the instrumentalists free from this process. They are called upon to be familiar with Ethel Smith, Perez Prado, Nino Rota and others to similarly enrich their parts. Skillful, entertaining parody, not camp, is what I am after.

Beneath all this is still another layer in which transformation takes place: a great web (I won't call it a system) of borrowings from the musical cookie jar of the last three centuries. These allusions and quotations from all over are my way of rounding out a musical experience by hearing it through filters that help create parallels and happy connections. To my surprise, many people, including the singers, missed quotes that I thought were obvious and pointed out to me borrowings of which I could not have been aware—none of which proves a thing. There is no need for me to publish a table of theses references since they are meant to amuse, and missing them will not detract from one's enjoyment of the work.

Much of this work is set in a parlando style, to be sung so that the natural rhythm of the words is followed. In some places the actual rhythm is notated. But in no case are these recitatives to seem absolutely even (except, perhaps, in *Hansel and Gretel*, where the whole scene is cold, stiff and strange). Nor is most of the music meant to depart from standard (i.e. Middle Atlantic States) pronunciation except where character voices are indicated. I do not like the sound of the vowels distorted for tone's sake. In any case, such a manner would be opposed to the directness of the text.

Congas, fox-trots, tangos, etc., form the basis for much of the acting movement. Just as frequent are directions which call for specific vocal styles based on people in movies, television or public life.

More nearly short stories, the poems were arranged with Anne Sexton's approval to emphasize the sub-plot, which concerns a 'middle-aged witch' who gradually becomes a vulnerable beauty slipping into nightmare. For each poem-story Anne Sexton includes a personal prologue which motivates the telling of the story.

If the general plot seems to be the succession of specially told Grimm fairy tales, then the sub-plot is about the artistic and psychic process of Anne Sexton. There is no need, of course, for the actress to look or act like Anne Sexton, because this is not a strictly autobiographical work, even though Anne Sexton becomes a creation here as much as Rumpelstiltskin. She is the people in the stories and the people are themselves.

I found it useful to aquaint myself with her other poetry, so that the many cross references could take on the proper resonance. There were several phrases which I could not understand, however, so I arranged to fly to Boston in October of 1972 to meet Anne Sexton and discuss these with her. We met at Joseph's Restaurant and talked over baked clams and beer. Here is what I recall of our conversation regarding these phrases:

CS: In *The Gold Key*, who are Alice, Samuel, Kurt, Eleanor, Jane, Brian, Maryel and the Boy?
AS: They are names of friends. The boy, I think is the audience. Maybe your actress can point to the audience.
CS: How do you pronounce *Iron Hans*?
AS: So that it doesn't sound like iron hands. Did you find out who St. Averton was?
CS: We found two.
AS: Really? I meant the one who is the patron saint of the insane.

The book of **Anne Sexton**

TRANSFORMATIONS

Set as a musical entertainment by **Conrad Susa**

Music Direction	**Thomas Dunn**
Stage Direction	**Nicholas Deutsch**
Set Design	**Michael Anania**
Costume Design	**Mary Harkins**
Lighting Design	**Toni Goldin**
Musical Preparation	**Gary Wedow**

Soprano	**Barbara Wallace**
Mezzo-soprano	**Jan Curtis**
Contralto	**Pamela Gore**
Tenor	**Richard Shadley**
Tenor	**Jon Humphrey**
Tenor	**Howard Crook**
Baritone	**Matthew Dooley**
Bass-baritone	**Philip Larson**

Friday, March 26 at 8

at the new
Berklee Performance Center
136 Massachusetts Avenue (at Boylston Street)

Tickets priced at $8 and $5 available by calling the **Handel & Haydn Society** office: 266-3605
or at the Center's box office after March 12

Transformations is story theater in music. It is based on an original conception by H. Wesley Balk and had its premiere under his direction by the Minnesota Opera Company in 1973. The performing forces include an ensemble of eight singers who take roles as diverse as princes, a vegetable garden, wicked queens, dwarfs, birds, bread, pebbles and wondrous musicians. The orchestra is made up of eight instrumentalists playing all kinds of instruments from handbells to electric harpsichord. Together, the singers and players present the musical gestures of jazz and popular music of the 30's, 40's & 50's, covering such styles as Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters and 'slow mean blues', boogie-woogie and a ***bossa nova*** beat. Buried among these gestures are musical quotes from many other sources like ***Turandot*** and the ***Moonlight Sonata***. The musical materials are miraculously transformed into an entertainment, witty, urbane and biting in its psychological implications. The cast includes the following, taking (among many others) the designated roles: Barbara Wallace (Snow White), Jan Curtis (Briar Rose/Anne Sexton), Pamela Gore (The Wicked Stepmother), Richard Shadley (Rumpelstilskin), Jon Humphrey (The Hunter), Howard Crook (Hansel) and Matthew Dooley (Iron Hans).

H&H

Handel and Haydn Society

25 Huntington Ave., Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Address correction requested

Return requested

NON PROFIT ORG.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 59482
BOSTON, MA

Transformations was originally published in a book of poems by Anne Sexton in 1971. For each poem-story a personal prologue is included, which motivates the telling of the story. Conrad Susa, with the author's approval, chose ten of the poems and arranged them to emphasize a sub-plot, which concerns a 'middle-age witch' who gradually transforms into a vulnerable beauty slipping into a nightmare.

The ten poems, based on fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, are more nearly short stories:

The Golden Key	*Rapunzel*
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs	*Godfather Death*
The White Snake	*The Wonderful Musician*
Iron Hans	*Hansel and Gretel*
Rumpelstilskin	*Briar Rose (Sleeping Beauty)*

Acknowledgments

The Society would like to express its appreciation to the following people and firms for assistance in the realization of this evening's performance of *Transformations*.

Mr. Endel Kalam
Mr. Ronald Nelson
Mrs. William Sherrcliff
Ms. Barbara Swan
Mr. William S. Thorpe

Mr. James Bynum and the Boston Conservatory of Music
Mr. Andrew Cohen and the Berklee Performance Center Staff
Dr. Wilbur D. Fulbright and the Boston University School of Music
Mr. Michael Garraway and the Boston Community Music Center
Mr. Robert MacWilliams and E. C. Schirmer Music Company
Mr. Chris McKinnon and Cody Enterprises
B N Productions, Boston
The Boston Ballet Company
The Williams Piano Company

This evening's East Coast premiere of Conrad Susa's chamber opera *Transformations* is presented by the Handel & Haydn Society in continuance of its 162 year commitment, begun with the first American performance of Handel's *Messiah* in April, 1818, to presentation of new and little-known works.

We hope that you enjoy this evening's performance and invite you to join with us in future seasons. Those of you who would like to become members of the Handel & Haydn Society, or would like to receive our mailings, may write to our office at 25 Huntington Avenue, Suite 410, Boston, Massachusetts 02116.

CS: What about Clifford, Vincent, Friedrich? I imagine that you meant Van Gogh and Nietszche. But Clifford—?

AS: Is Clifford Biers. He wrote ***The Mind That Found Itself***. A famous book. The other names are Zelda Fitzgerald, Hannah Green, who wrote ***I Never Promised You A Rose Garden***, and Renée—I can't remember her name—who wrote ***Diary of a Schizophrenic***.

CS: That's a help. But I still find ***Iron Hans*** confusing.

AS: So do I.

CS: The most I can make out—if the number three means anything in this fairy tale—it is that the black pool and the golden spring and the princess are a unified triad.

AS: What a nice idea! After all, it is a holy story. You know—'Christ's boy-child' and all that...

CS: Ah.

AS: Well, maybe it isn't that clear. Say, what do you put on the stage in the ***Rapunzel*** story?

CS: Why, you and your aunt in the library.

AS: I knew I never should have said all that!

CS: In ***Rapunzel***, who are the three Christs of Ypsilanti?

AS: Three guys who thought they were Jesus Christ. The doctors brought them together to see how they would act with each other. Terrible. They suffered. It's all in a book called by that name.

CS: 'Ann Arbor'?

AS: I lectured there a long time ago.

Then Anne Sexton read ***The Gold Key*** and the last part of ***Briar Rose***.

AS: Well? I'm not a very good reader.

CS: I'm really grateful that you've shown yourself to me so openly. I feel I really know you. After all, I've got to become you when I go back to write this opera.

AS: Good luck on that one! I feel I know you too. And I trust you.

Acknowledgments

The Society is grateful for assistance with costs of this production from the following sources:
a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts;
a bequest under the will of Florence K. Payne;
a gift from David Rockefeller, Jr. in memory of Anne Sexton;
and contributions from George W. Butterworth III, Dr. and Mrs. George Geyer, Joan and Allan Hobson, Maryel and Laurence Locke, Karin Tate, and friends of Anne Sexton.

Production Staff

Production Stage Manager Debbie Engene
Lighting Robert Seder, Master Electrician
Jonelle Lesan
Costumes Amy Holley, Costumière
Barbara Drummy
Technical Director Alan Chapman
House Staff The Berklee Performance Center / Andrew Cohan, House Manager

March 26, 1976 / Berklee Performance Center · Boston
161st Season / **The Handel & Haydn Society** · Thomas Dunn, Music Director

Anne Sexton / Conrad Susa

Transformations

An Entertainment in Two Acts

I

Prologue: The Gold Key · Our need to understand ourselves

'It is not enough to read Hesse
and drink clam chowder
we must have the answers.'

Anne Sexton Jan Curtis

II

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs · The ambivalent relationship of mother and daughter

'Rolling her china-blue doll eyes
open and shut.
Open to say,
Good Day Mama,
and shut for the thrust
of the unicorn.'

Snow White Barbara Wallace
Stepmother-Queen Jan Curtis
Mirror Pamela Gore
The Prince Howard Crook
A Hunter Philip Larson

III

The White Snake · The divine madness of the artist.

'There was a day
when all the animals talked to me.

And then I knew that the voice
of the spirits had been let in—
as intense as an epileptic aura—
and that no longer would I sing
alone.'

The Princess Barbara Wallace
The White Snake Pamela Gore
The Servant Richard Shadley
The King Matthew Dooley

IV

Iron Hans · Our ambivalence toward the insane

'I am the mother of the insane.
Let me give you my children:

Take an old lady in a cafeteria
staring at the meat-loaf,
crying: Mama! Mama!
And you'll move off.'

Iron Hans Matthew Dooley
The Princess Barbara Wallace
The Prince Howard Crook
The King Richard Shadley
A Gardener Jon Humphrey
The Neighboring King Philip Larson

V

Rumpelstiltskin · The Doppelgänger inside us all.

'I am your dwarf.
I am the enemy within.
I am the boss of your dreams.
I am the law of your members.'

Rumpelstiltskin Richard Shadley
The Doppelgänger Pamela Gore
A Miller Philip Larson
The Miller's Daughter Barbara Wallace
Her Baby Jon Humphrey
The King Matthew Dooley

Intermission

VI

Rapunzel · The need of women for each other.

' A woman
who loves a woman
is forever young.
Hold me, my young dear,
hold me.'

Rapunzel Barbara Wallace
Mother Gothel Jan Curtis
The Prince Howard Crook
The Mills Brothers Richard Shadley
Jon Humphrey
Matthew Dooley
Philip Larson

VII **Godfather Death** · The fear of and desire for death.

'Hurry, Godfather death,
Mister tyranny,
each message you give
has a dance to it,
a fish twitch,
a little crotch dance.'

Vocalist Jan Curtis

VIII **The Wonderful Musician** · The demonic power of music.

'My sisters,
do you remember the fiddlers
of your youth?
Those dances
so like a drunkard
lighting a fire in the belly?
Remember?
Remember music
and beware.'

The Musician Richard Shadley
A Fox Howard Crook
A Wolf Matthew Dooley
A Hare Philip Larson
A Hunter Jon Humphrey
The Andrews Sisters Barbara Wallace
Jan Curtis
Pamela Gore

IX **Hansel and Gretel** · Mother-love and cannibalism

'Little plum,
said the mother to her son,
I want to bite,
I want to chew,
I will eat you up,

Oh succulent one,
it is but one turn in the road
and I would be a cannibal!

Hansel Howard Crook
Gretel Barbara Wallace
The Mother Richard Shadley
The Father Philip Larson
The Witch Pamela Gore

X **Epilogue: Briar Rose (Sleeping Beauty)** · The ambivalent relationship of daughter and father.

'Daddy?
That's another kind of prison.
It's not the prince at all,
but my father
drunkenly bent over my bed,
circling the abyss like a shark,
my father thick upon me
like some sleeping jellyfish.

What voyage this, little girl?
This coming out of prison?
God help—
this life after death?

Briar Rose Barbara Wallace
The King Philip Larson
The Prince Howard Crook
The Twelfth Fairy Pamela Gore
The Thirteenth Fairy Richard Shadley

The following jazz styles, dances, vocalists and personalities are invoked in addition to the Mills Brothers and the Andrews Sisters:

Blues	Tango	Lena Horne	Ethel Waters
Bounce	Conga	Bing Crosby	Truman Capote
Boogie	Habañera	Ethel Merman	Gabriel Heater
Cool (Miles Davis)	Beguine	Patricia Neway	W. C. Fields
Mexican	Slink	Kate Smith	Groucho Marx
Burlesque	Charleston	Jeanette MacDonald	

Music Direction Thomas Dunn
Stage Direction Nicholas Deutsch
Musical Preparation Gary Wedow
Set Design Michael Anania
Costume Design Consultant Mary Harkins
Lighting Design Toni Goldin
Choreography Edward Androse

Clarinet/Sax Leo Foley
Trumpet James Tinsley
Trombone Paul Gay
Double Bass Anthony Beadle
Percussion Fred Buda & Dean Anderson
Keyboards Newton Wayland & Gary Wedow

By special arrangement with E. C. Schirmer Music Company.

The use of cameras or any other recording device is strictly forbidden.

Artists

Thomas Dunn was born in Aberdeen, South Dakota, and reared in Baltimore, where his virtuosity as a keyboard instrumentalist was demonstrated at an early age. He was educated at Johns Hopkins University, the Peabody Conservatory of Music, and Harvard. As a Fulbright Scholar at the Royal Conservatory in Amsterdam he became the first American to receive the Netherlands' highest award in music, the ***Diploma in Orchestral Conducting***. As conductor of the New York Festival Orchestra and Chorus he attracted national recognition and critical acclaim for his originality in program-making, informed musicianship, and high standards of performance. He was appointed Music Director and Conductor of the Handel & Haydn Society in 1967. A scholar and acknowledged authority on performance practices of the Baroque, he is Editor-in-Chief of E. C. Schirmer Music Company, has held faculty appointments at Swarthmore College, the Peabody Conservatory, and the University of Pennsylvania, among others, and is in demand as a guest lecturer and conductor. Mr. Dunn has recorded for RCA Victor and Decca.

Nicholas Deutsch, stage director, has directed for the Associate Artists Opera Company's productions of ***The Crucible***, Paisiello's ***Barber of Seville, Riders to the Sea, The Bear,*** and ***Cinderella***, and for ***The Secret Marriage*** by the Cambridge Opera Workshop. His work outside the New England area has included ***Barber of Seville*** with the Western Opera Theater, the world premiere of James Bolle's ***Oleum Canis*** with Monadnock Music, and, most recently, a new ***Cinderella*** with the Chattanooga Opera Association. Mr. Deutsch has been Assistant Director for the Opera Company of Boston under Sarah Caldwell.

Barbara Wallace, soprano, Boston native and graduate of the New England Conservatory, has been soloist at the Gardner Museum, with the Boston Opera Company and the Cambridge Festival Orchestra, and has appeared with the Detroit Symphony.

Jan Curtis, mezzo-soprano, has sung leading roles in ***The Marriage of Figaro, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Cosi Fan Tutte, Albert Herring, Carmen,*** and ***Dido and Aeneas***, appearing with the Seattle Touring Opera, the Santa Fe Opera, Associated Artists Opera Company of Boston, and the Boston Opera. Miss Curtis has recorded for the Vox label.

Pamela Gore, contralto, most recently sang with the Society in Handel's ***Messiah*** and Haydn's ***Il Ritorno di Tobia***. Among her many performances of contemporary music are roles in the Society's production of ***Postcard from Morocco***, Stravinsky's ***Les Noces***, with the American Ballet Theater, Peter Maxwell Davies' ***Leopardi Fragments*** with the Boston Ballet Company, and Berio's ***O King*** at the Julliard School. This season she toured with Boris Goldovsky's company as Bertha in the ***Barber of Seville***.

Richard Shadley, tenor, has appeared numerous times with the Society in recent years. In Stravinsky's ***Les Noces***, he has sung the tenor role with the American Ballet, the Royal Ballet of London, the New York Philharmonic, and the Stony Brook Festival. He has performed other works by Stravinsky, including the first concert performance of ***The Flood*** with the New York Philharmonic. Equally at home with the Baroque, Mr. Shadley has performed ***Messiah*** and major Bach works with the Society and others.

Jon Humphrey, tenor, has appeared in past seasons with the Robert Shaw Chorale, the New York Pro Musica, and with many major orchestras throughout the United States, including the Cleveland Symphony. Mr. Humphrey most recently sang the Haydn ***Il Ritorno di Tobia*** with the Society. He records for RCA Victor and Columbia Records.

Howard Crook, tenor, received his Master of Music from the University of Illinois in voice and opera. Following two years of study and performance in Europe, Mr. Crook was a Fellow with the Center for Music Experiment at La Jolla, California, where he premiered works by Roger Reynolds, Ed London, Ulysses Kay, and Dave Brubeck. Most recently he was Music Director of the National Theatre School of Canada in Montreal, and at the Seattle Repertory Theatre, where he was also an actor.

Matthew Dooley, baritone, brings a very diversified background to this production of ***Transformations***, having performed over thirty roles from both standard operatic repertoire and Broadway musicals. His roles include Schaunard in Puccini's ***La Boheme***, Figaro in ***The Marriage of Figaro***, John Buchanan (Hoiby's ***Summer and Smoke***), El Gallo (***The Fantastics***), and Fagin in ***Oliver***. Mr. Dooley has performed extensively in New England, and has worked with the Wolf Trap Company in Virginia and the St. Paul (Minnesota) Opera.

Philip Larson, bass-baritone, a graduate of the University of Illinois, Urbana, has been associated with music departments in several universities, and was a Fellow at the University of California, San Diego, Center for Music Experiment. Mr. Larson has worked continuously over the past ten years in the performance of contemporary music, in addition to a much longer involvement in classical vocal performance. His operatic roles have included Don Basilio in ***Barber of Seville***, Bartolo in ***The Marriage of Figaro***, and he has sung many of the roles in Gunther Schuller's ***Visitation*** He has appeared with the Bach Aria Group, the Camarata Singers, the New Music Chorale Ensemble, the American Symphony Orchestra, the National Chorale and the San Diego Chamber Orchestra.

Beware: Keep out of reach of children!

ANNE SEXTON

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

Has written "A wild, astonishing, blood-curdling book"*

TRANSFORMATIONS

With a Preface by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
Drawings by Barbara Swan

"What a wild, astonishing, bloodcurdling book Anne Sexton has written."
— *Stanley Kunitz*

"Brilliant, beautiful, funny and — the pun can't be resisted — decidedly grim."
— *Louis Untermeyer*

"Sexton's brilliant colloquial diction and firm control persuade us that this is how it should have been all along."
— *Library Journal*

"Pulitzer poet Anne Sexton veers from her directly personal *Love Poems* (1969) to turn out a stunningly perverse sheaf of wry 'transformations' of 17 of the familiar fairy tales of the brothers Grimm. Here are 'Snow White,' 'Rumpelstiltskin,' 'The Twelve Dancing Princesses' and the others as no one else has yet treated them — metaphoric embroidery-designs that wring an existentialist laughter out of the common roots of sadism that a Disney-bred generation has preferred not to acknowledge."
— *Publishers' Weekly*

Available from the Publisher:
Please send me _____ copies at $5.00 (Hard bound) _____ copies $3.45 (paper)
_____ copies at $25.00 (Ltd. Edition signed by Anne Sexton)
I enclose check/money order Send to Houghton Mifflin Company, 2 Park St. Boston, Mass. 02107
Name _____
Address _____
_____ Zip _____
(Include 85¢ for postage and handling.)

Yamaha Piano
the official piano of the Handel and Haydn Society

The world famous

SINCE 1887

YAMAHA

Pianos and Organs

Williams' Piano Shop, Inc.
123 Harvard Street, Brookline / 232-8870 or 232-2773